



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Aviation
Administration

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

JUN 7 2010

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Waxman:

Thank you for your May 11 letter about the 250-degree test for departures being conducted at Santa Monica Municipal Airport (SMO).

The Federal Aviation Administration has the statutory responsibility and primary mission to promote safety, efficiency, and provide for the safe use of airspace. It is a continuing challenge to balance providing safe, efficient support to air traffic control with community noise impact concerns. I assure you we are sensitive to the needs of the communities we serve and the needs of pilots and airlines.

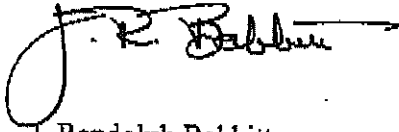
Although we are not required to conduct a public outreach program for a 180-day test such as the one being conducted at SMO, we pursued several avenues of outreach before the start of the test. The Western-Pacific Regional Administrator and air traffic representatives met with a number of the SMO operators, including the airport director and staff, as well as the city manager, city attorney, and a member of the city's airport commission. City officials were fully briefed on what the test would entail. In addition, detailed information regarding the test was provided to the press, including the Los Angeles Times, the Santa Monica Daily Press, and the weekly Argonaut. The test is scheduled to end June 8.

The test was initiated in an attempt to decrease departure delays for SMO and nearby Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Preliminary results have been promising, with a significant reduction in delays at both SMO and LAX. Departure delays at SMO for all aircraft have decreased by approximately 80 percent, and taxi-out times at LAX have decreased by 50 seconds per airplane. After a thorough evaluation of the results, to include review by FAA environmental specialists, our Air Traffic Organization will make a recommendation regarding permanent implementation of the 250-degree heading. If the recommendation is to make the procedure permanent, public outreach regarding environmental analysis will be initiated. The procedures in place prior to December 10, 2009, will resume at the test's conclusion until a permanent procedure is determined.

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If I can be of further assistance, please contact me or Roderick D. Hall, Assistant Administrator for Government and Industry Affairs, at (202) 267-3277.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. R. Babbitt", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

J. Randolph Babbitt
Administrator